

**South Carolina General Assembly**  
124th Session, 2021-2022

**H. 5150**

General Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2022-2023  
Ratified Version

**PART IB**  
**OPERATION OF STATE GOVERNMENT**

**SECTION 61 - E230 - COMMISSION ON INDIGENT DEFENSE**

**61.1.** (INDEF: Defense of Indigents Formula) The amount appropriated in this act for "Defense of Indigents" shall have the first \$3,600,000 distributed as follows: \$1,200,000 shall be distributed in the amount of \$75,000 per circuit for 1.00 Public Defender and \$2,400,000 shall be distributed in the amount of \$150,000 per circuit for 2.00 investigators; the remaining amount appropriated shall be apportioned among counties in accord with Section 17-3-330 of the 1976 Code, but on a per capita basis and based upon the most current official decennial census of the United States; provided that no county shall receive funding in an amount less than the amount apportioned to it as of July 1, 2020. The level of contribution of each county as of July 1, 2001, must be maintained. No county shall be permitted to contribute less money than the amount the county contributed in the prior fiscal year. Within the amount of money established for indigent defense services, the State shall authorize the Commission on Indigent Defense to receive up to or spend no more than \$3,000,000 for the Death Penalty Trial Fund annually for use of the defense in capital cases pursuant to Section 16-3-26 of the 1976 Code, for juveniles facing the possibility of a sentence of life without parole, and for the expenses of the operation of the Commission on Indigent Defense to include salaries and operations expenses of the Death Penalty Trial Division. The State also shall authorize the Commission on Indigent Defense to receive up to or spend no more than \$2,500,000 annually to pay fees and expenses of private counsel appointed in noncapital cases pursuant to Section 17-3-50 (Conflict Fund). Of the funds generated from the fees imposed under Sections 14-1-206(C)(4), 14-1-207(C)(6) and 14-1-208(C)(6) ~~and the application fee provided in Section 17-3-30(B)~~, on a monthly basis, fifty percent must be deposited into the Death Penalty Trial Fund, fifteen percent must be deposited into the Conflict Fund, and thirty-five percent each month must be apportioned among the counties' public defender offices pursuant to Section 17-3-330. At the end of each fiscal year any leftover funds shall carryover to the next fiscal year for the same purposes. All applications for the payment of fees and expenses in capital cases shall be applied for from the Death Penalty Trial Fund which shall be administered by the Commission on Indigent Defense. All applications for the payment of fees and expenses of private counsel or expenses of public defenders pursuant to Section 17-3-50 shall be applied for from the Conflict Fund administered by the Commission on Indigent Defense. Reimbursement in excess of the hourly rate and limit set forth in Section 17-3-50 is authorized only if the court certifies, in a written order with specific findings of fact, prior to the fees being incurred, that reimbursement in excess of the rates or limit is necessary to provide reimbursement adequate to ensure effective assistance of counsel and reimbursement in excess of the limit is appropriate because the services to be provided are reasonable and necessary. If prior approval by written order of the court is not obtained, no additional fees shall be paid under any circumstances.

Upon a finding in ex parte proceedings that investigative, expert, or other services are reasonable and necessary for the representation of the defendant, the court shall authorize the defendant's attorney to obtain such services on behalf of the defendant and shall authorize the payment, from funds available to the Commission on Indigent Defense, of fees and expenses not to exceed five hundred dollars as the court considers appropriate. Payment in excess of the five hundred dollar limit is authorized only if the court certifies, in a written order with specific findings of fact, prior to the expense being incurred, that payment in excess of the limit is appropriate because the services to be provided are reasonable and necessary to provide adequate defense. Payments shall be made from funds appropriated for this purpose from the Commission of Indigent Defense. If prior approval by written order of the court is not obtained, no additional expenses shall be paid under any circumstances.

Indigent defense vouchers authorized in this provision must be reviewed and paid pursuant to procedures and policies established by the Commission on Indigent Defense. The commission shall provide a copy of the established procedures and policies to the Senate Finance Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee.

**61.2.** (INDEF: State Employee Compensation Prohibited) Except as otherwise provided in Proviso 117.5, no money appropriated pursuant to Defense of Indigents shall be used to compensate any state employees appointed by the court as examiners, guardians ad litem or attorneys nor shall such funds be used in payment to any state agency for providing such services by their employees.

**61.3.** (INDEF: Appellate Conflict Fund) The purpose of the Appellate Conflict Fund is to provide money to pay attorneys for representing indigent defendants on appellate review when the Office of Appellate Defense is unable to do so. Funds designated for appellate use in conflict cases shall be administered by the Commission on Indigent Defense. The Office of Appellate Defense must first determine that it is unable to provide representation. Fees shall be \$40 per hour for out of court work and \$60 for in court work, with a maximum of \$3,500 per case for noncapital appeals. Fees shall be \$50 per hour for out of court work and \$75 per hour for in court work in capital appeals with a maximum of \$10,000 per capital appeal. The appropriate appellate court shall review and approve vouchers for payment for appellate conflict cases. The Office of Appellate Defense shall continue to provide printing and other support functions currently provided from their resources. On June thirtieth of each year, the Commission on Indigent Defense shall review all outstanding obligations in this fund. Any unspent and unobligated money shall be used to pay outstanding vouchers in the Death Penalty Trial Fund or the Conflict Fund, provided the designated fund has become exhausted during the year.

**61.4.** (INDEF: SC Appellate Court Rule 608 Appointments) The funds appropriated under "SC Appellate Court Rule 608 Appointments" shall be used for Civil Court Appointments including Termination of Parental Rights, Abuse and Neglect, Probate Court Commitments, Sexually Violent Predator Act, and Post-Conviction Relief (PCR) and Criminal Conflict appointments to reimburse court appointed private attorneys and for other expenditures as specified in this provision. SC Appellate Court Rule 608 Appointments funds may not be transferred or used for any other purpose.

A portion of the funds appropriated under "SC Appellate Court Rule 608 Appointments" shall be used for "Termination of Parental Rights" cases and "Abuse and Neglect" cases to reimburse private attorneys who are appointed by the Family Court to represent guardians ad litem, children, or parents under the provisions of Sections 63-7-1620 et seq., 63-7-2560 et seq., 63-9-320(A)(2) et seq., 63-19-810 et seq., and 63-19-2210 et seq.; for "Probate Court Commitment" cases to reimburse private attorneys who are appointed by the Probate Court to represent indigent persons; and for "Sexually Violent Predator" cases to reimburse private attorneys who are appointed by the Circuit Court pursuant to Sections 44-48-10, et seq., to represent indigent persons. When private counsel is appointed pursuant to these provisions, counsel shall be reimbursed a reasonable fee to be determined on the basis of fifty dollars per hour or reimbursement may also be made on the basis of a set (flat) fee. The method of payment and the amount of the set fee will be determined by the Commission on Indigent Defense. Attorney fees shall not exceed two thousand dollars for any case under which such private attorney is appointed.

A portion of the funds appropriated under "SC Appellate Court Rule 608 Appointments" shall be used for noncapital Post Conviction Relief Cases. Any attorney appointed shall be compensated at a rate not to exceed forty dollars per hour for time expended out of court and sixty dollars per hour for time expended in court, or on the basis of a set (flat) fee. The method of payment and amount of set (flat) fee will be determined by the Commission on Indigent Defense. Attorney fees shall not exceed one thousand dollars in any single case.

A portion of the funds appropriated under "SC Appellate Court Rule 608 Appointments" shall be used for noncapital criminal cases pursuant to Section 17-3-50 (Conflict Fund). Any attorney appointed shall be compensated at a rate not to exceed forty dollars per hour for time expended out of court and sixty dollars per hour for time expended in court, or on the basis of a set (flat) fee. The method of payment and amount of set (flat) fee will be determined by the Commission on Indigent Defense. Attorney fees shall not exceed three thousand five hundred dollars in any single felony case or one thousand dollars in any single misdemeanor case.

Reimbursement in excess of the hourly rate and limit set forth herein is authorized only if the court certifies, in a written order with specific findings of fact, prior to the fees being incurred, that reimbursement in excess of

the rates or limit is necessary to provide reimbursement adequate to ensure effective assistance of counsel and reimbursement in excess of the limit is appropriate because the services to be provided are reasonable and necessary. If prior approval by written order of the court is not obtained, no additional fees shall be paid under any circumstances.

Upon a finding in ex parte proceedings that investigative, expert, or other services are reasonable and necessary for the representation of the defendant, the court shall authorize the defendant's attorney to obtain such services on behalf of the defendant and shall authorize the payment, from funds available to the Commission on Indigent Defense, of fees and expenses not to exceed five hundred dollars as the court considers appropriate. Payment in excess of the five-hundred-dollar limit is authorized only if the court certifies, in a written order with specific findings of fact, prior to the expense being incurred, that payment in excess of the limit is appropriate because the services to be provided are reasonable and necessary to provide adequate defense. Payments shall be made from funds appropriated for this purpose from the Commission of Indigent Defense. If prior approval by written order of the court is not obtained, no additional expenses shall be paid under any circumstances.

Indigent defense vouchers authorized in this provision must be reviewed and paid pursuant to procedures and policies established by the Commission on Indigent Defense. The commission shall provide a copy of the established procedures and policies to the Senate Finance Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee.

A portion of the funds appropriated under "SC Appellate Court Rule 608 Appointments" may be used by the Commission on Indigent Defense to retain, on a contractual basis, the services of attorneys and other professionals to assist court appointed attorneys to provide quality and effective representation. The commission shall establish all policies, procedures, and contract provisions as it deems appropriate for the implementation of the system including, but not limited to, the selection and compensation of contract awardees.

**61.5.** (INDEF: Carry Forward) To offset budget reductions, the Commission on Indigent Defense may carry forward and utilize any unencumbered balances available in the Appellate Conflict Fund and the SC Appellate Court Rule 608 Appointment Fund at the end of the prior fiscal year.

**61.6.** (INDEF: Public Defender Fee) Every person placed on probation on or after July 1, 2003, who was represented by a public defender or appointed counsel, shall be assessed a fee of five hundred dollars. The revenue generated from this fee must be collected by the clerk of court and sent on a monthly basis to the Commission on Indigent Defense. However, if a defendant fails to pay this fee, this failure alone is not sufficient basis for incarceration for a probation violation. This assessment shall be collected and paid over before any other fees.

**61.7.** (INDEF: Defense of Indigents Civil Action Application Fee) (A) A person requesting appointment of counsel in any termination of parental rights (TPR), abuse and neglect, or any other civil court action in this state shall execute an affidavit that the person is financially unable to employ counsel and that affidavit shall set forth all of the person's assets. This affidavit must be completed before counsel may be appointed. If it appears that the person has some assets but they are insufficient to employ private counsel, the court, in its discretion, may order the person to pay these assets or a portion thereof to the Commission on Indigent Defense.

(B) A forty dollar application fee for appointed counsel services must be collected from every person who executes an affidavit that they are financially unable to employ counsel. The person may apply to the court, the clerk of court, or other appropriate official for a waiver or reduction in the application fee. If it is determined that the person is unable to pay the application fee, the fee may be waived or reduced, provided that if the fee is waived or reduced, the clerk or appropriate official shall report the amount waived or reduced to the trial judge and the trial judge shall order the remainder of the fee paid by a time payment method or such method as the trial judge deems appropriate. The clerk of court or other appropriate official shall collect the application fee imposed by this section and remit the proceeds to the Commission on Indigent Defense on a monthly basis. The monies must be deposited in an interest-bearing account separate from the general fund and used only to provide for indigent defense services. The monies shall be administered by the Commission on Indigent Defense. The clerk of court or other appropriate official shall maintain a record of all persons applying for representation and the disposition of the application and shall provide this information to the Commission on

Indigent Defense on a monthly basis as well as reporting the amount of funds collected or waived.

(C) In matters in which a juvenile is brought before a court, the parents or legal guardian of such juvenile shall execute the above affidavit based upon their financial status and shall be responsible for paying any fee. In matters concerning juveniles, the parents or legal guardians of said juvenile, shall be advised in writing of this requirement at the earliest stage of the proceedings against said juvenile.

(D) Nothing contained above shall restrict or hinder a court from appointing counsel in any emergency proceedings or where existing statutes do not provide sufficient time for an individual to complete the application process.

(E) The appointment of counsel, as herein before provided, creates a claim against the assets and estate of the person who is provided counsel or the parents or legal guardians of a juvenile in an amount equal to the costs of representation as determined by a voucher submitted by the appointed counsel and approved by the court, less that amount that the person pays to the appointed counsel.

(F) Such claim shall be filed in the office of the clerk of court in the county where the person is assigned counsel, but the filing of a claim shall not constitute a lien against real or personal property of the person unless, in the discretion of the court, part or all of such claim is reduced to judgment by appropriate order of the court, after serving the person with at least thirty days' notice that judgment will be entered. When a claim is reduced to judgment, it shall have the same effect as judgments, except as modified by this provision.

**61.8.** (INDEF: Exemption for Pass Through Funding) The funds distributed by the Commission on Indigent Defense to the Legal Services Corporation in accordance with Section 14-1-204 of the 1976 Code shall not be considered part of the commission's budget for purposes of calculating budget reductions.

**61.9.** (INDEF: Reporting Requirement) Circuit Public Defenders shall provide, in a manner and form as the agency head requires, information and data concerning caseloads, dispositions, and other information as required by the agency head or General Assembly. The agency shall withhold payments and transfers to Circuit Public Defenders who are not in compliance with the agency reporting requirements.

**61.10.** (INDEF: Capital Case Contract Attorneys) Funds appropriated from the Death Penalty Trial Fund may be used by the commission to retain, on a contractual basis, the service of attorneys qualified to provide representation in capital proceedings to include: capital trials, post-conviction relief actions, re-sentencing, appeals or any other capital litigation proceeding.

The commission shall establish all policies, procedures and contract provisions as it deems appropriate for the implementation of the system, including but not limited to the selection and compensation of contract awardees. The commission may use these funds to retain, on a contractual basis, the services of other professionals to assist court appointed attorneys to provide quality and effective representation in the above capital proceedings.

**61.11.** (INDEF: Optional Courts and Indigent Representation) If a municipality has or elects to have an optional municipal court system, it must provide adequate funds for representation of indigents. No public defender shall be appointed in any such court unless the municipality and the office of the circuit public defender have reached an agreement for indigent representation and no funds allocated to the commission shall be used to provide compensation for appointed counsel in municipal courts.

**61.12.** (INDEF: Court Case Contract Attorneys) Of the funds appropriated to the Commission on Indigent Defense for court case backlogs, the commission shall distribute fifty percent to each circuit based upon the proportional statewide share of the number of pending cases for each circuit aged 545 days or more, thirty percent to each circuit based upon the proportional statewide share of the number of pending cases for each circuit aged 366 days and less than 545 days, and twenty percent to each circuit based upon the proportional statewide share of the number of pending cases for each circuit aged 365 days or less as reported by the Judicial Department for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021. These funds shall be used by each circuit for the purpose of hiring contract attorneys to address pending active cases.

By June 30, the commission, in coordination with the Judicial Department and the solicitors' offices, shall provide a report to the Senate Finance Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee on the amount of funds received by each circuit and on the effectiveness of how these funds have reduced pending cases. The commission shall track any other information deemed necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of this program.

**61.13.** (INDEF: Indigent Sex Offender Registry Removal Cases) The funding appropriated under SC Appellate Court Rule 608 Appointments shall be used for Sex Offender Registry Removal actions to include court ordered investigative, expert, or other services necessary for representation by public defenders or other private appointed counsel.

Any private attorney appointed shall be compensated at a rate not to exceed forty dollars per hour for time expended out of court and sixty dollars per hour for time expended in court, or on the basis of a set (flat) fee. The method of payment and amount of set (flat) fee will be determined by the Commission on Indigent Defense. Attorney fees shall not exceed three thousand five hundred dollars.

Reimbursement in excess of the hourly rate and limit set forth herein is authorized only if the court certifies, in a written order with specific findings of fact, prior to the fees being incurred, that reimbursement in excess of the rates or limit is necessary to provide reimbursement adequate to ensure effective assistance of counsel and reimbursement in excess of the limit is appropriate because the services to be provided are reasonable and necessary. If prior approval by written order of the court is not obtained, no additional fees shall be paid under any circumstances.

Upon a finding in ex parte proceedings that investigative, expert, or other services are reasonable and necessary for the representation of the defendant, the court shall authorize the defendant's attorney to obtain such services on behalf of the defendant and shall authorize the payment, from funds available to the Commission on Indigent Defense, of fees and expenses not to exceed five hundred dollars as the court considers appropriate. Payment in excess of the five-hundred-dollar limit is authorized only if the court certifies, in a written order with specific findings of fact, prior to the expense being incurred, that payment in excess of the limit is appropriate because the services to be provided are reasonable and necessary to provide adequate defense. Payments shall be made from funds appropriated for this purpose from the Commission of Indigent Defense. If prior approval by written order of the court is not obtained, no additional expenses shall be paid under any circumstances.

The Commission on Indigent Defense may retain, on a contractual basis, the services of attorneys and other professionals to assist court appointed attorneys to provide quality and effective representation in these cases.